



Office of Surface Mining

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Office of Surface Mining
1951 Constitution Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240
202-208-2719
osmre@osmre.gov

Office of Surface Mining News Release

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Ed Castillo
(202) 208-2838
ecastillo@osmre.gov

Coal operators recognized for outstanding reclamation

Editors note: Includes information relevant to Arizona (Navajo and Hopi Reservations), Illinois, Indiana, Montana, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) Coal operators were recognized for outstanding reclamation of mined lands Tuesday when the US Office of Surface Mining presented its annual Excellence in Surface Mining and Reclamation Awards.

Ten operators were honored by OSM at an awards banquet hosted by the National Mining Association in Washington. The awards recognize accomplishments in reclaiming mined lands, restoring the environment and benefiting communities.

"These operators inspire the entire industry," said Jeff Jarrett, director of OSM. "All of these projects are team efforts, made possible by dedicated, skilled professionals--mine managers, reclamation specialists, engineers, and equipment operators. They have established the high standards for mine reclamation that exist today."

The Excellence in Surface coal Mining and Reclamation awards program began in 1986 to publicly recognize outstanding active coal mine reclamation and to highlight exemplary reclamation techniques.

Mining operations receiving awards for 2005 were:

Director's Award:

Arch of Wyoming, Seminoe #1 Mine, Hanna, WY

The 2005 Director's Award honors innovation leading to greater efficient and superior reclamation. The Seminoe 1 Mine employs new methods to establish shrubs, grasses and forbs, yielding results that greatly exceed regulatory goals and standards. The company has also reclaimed the site to establish wildlife habitat, resulting in a reclaimed site that supports grazing livestock and wildlife in arid Wyoming conditions.

National Awards:

Peabody Western Coal Company, Kayenta/BlackMesa Mines, Navajo County, AZ

In 1998, the Peabody Western Coal Company began developing a grazing management program on reclaimed lands. They met with Native American stakeholders, and evaluated data that would help establish management guidelines for livestock grazing. By 2004, 18 families were grazing livestock on 3,700 acres of pasture. This exemplary program returns reclaimed land to its traditional use--long term grazing--a use that's vitally important to the local population.

Red River Coal Company, Humphries Enterprises, Inc. Job #1 and #2, Norton, VA

The Red River Coal Company's innovative techniques helped eliminate more than 4,800 feet of dangerous, abandoned highwalls during mining. Red River also worked with Virginia Tech University to test reforestation techniques for reclaimed land. Different mixtures of trees and soil preparation were tested, as well as methods of applying herbicides to control competing vegetation around tree seedlings. The lessons learned here are already being employed in the reforestation of Virginia coal fields.

Foundation Coal Holdings, Inc., Delta Mine, Harrisburg, IL

Innovative reclamation at the Delta Mine resulted in a variety of topography, as well as land uses. The 3,800 acre area integrates cropland with forestry, lakes and wildlife habitat, providing viable, long-term land use for this rural Illinois community.

Western Energy Company, Rosebud Mine, Colstrip, MT

The reclamation plan at The Rosebud Mine was modified to preserve the valuable habitat provided by pre-mine topographic features. By leaving a large area above the final cut untouched, regrading the reclaimed land minimized disturbance and reduced the area of the final highwall. More than 5,000 mature ponderosa pine trees and associated plant and animal species were saved. Although still in the final stages of reclamation, the preservation of native slopes, sandstone cliffs, and established forest has created a reclaimed mine site that is already characteristic of the surrounding Montana landscape.

United Coal, Inc. Stenger/Bond Surface Mine, Clarksburg, WV

This 90-acre coal mining and reclamation operation had been previously mined, and contained more than a mile of un-reclaimed highwalls. Today, the abandoned mine hazards are eliminated and the landowner is harvesting hay from the site. Permanent ponds were constructed, fences were built, and farm roads now interconnect the fields. By working closely with the landowner, the mine has been returned to productive long-term agricultural use. The attention to detail represents special dedication, and has resulted in reclamation at the highest levels.

Peabody Coal Company, Universal Mine Slurry Wetland Area, Universal, IL

This wetland area--more than 80 acres, was once a coal wash slurry deposit. Today it includes 20 acres of permanently impounded water and surrounding wildlife habitat. The reclamation was a cooperative effort by the mining company and the International Union of Operating Engineers. Buildings used during the mining now house an Apprenticeship and Training Program. Both the wetlands and adjacent training center are valuable assets to the community--excellent examples of a reclaimed site offering more than before it was mined.

Kennecott Energy, Spring Creek Coal Company, Spring Creek Mine, Decker, MT

The Spring Creek Mine is located where rainfall is only 10 inches per year. This makes both mining and reclamation more difficult. Today, native vegetation has been re-established by a unique combination of grading and seed mixtures. It took a thorough understanding of local topography to sculpt features that would support diverse vegetation--providing both a wildlife habitat and livestock grazing. Highly productive habitat is a critical part of reclamation in arid parts of the country. This project is a great example for other operations throughout the west.

Good Neighbor Awards:

The "Good Neighbor" Awards were established by OSM Director Jeff Jarrett to recognize operators who take measures to establish good working relations and interaction with mine neighbors.

Gold Award:

Powder River Coal Company, North Antelope Rochelle Mine, Gillette, WY

The North Antelope Rochelle Mine is the world's largest coal mine -- producing nearly 82.5 million tons of sub-bituminous coal in 2004. It's also a good neighbor to the surrounding community. Frequent demonstrations at the mine site, and educational school tours have taught hundreds of children about modern Powder River Basin mining and reclamation. The company has been the major contributor to the Thunder Basin Grasslands Prairie Ecosystem Association and actively works to increase awareness about stewardship of Wyoming's natural resources.

Silver Award:

Peabody Western Coal Company, Kayenta and Black Mesa Mines, Navajo County, AZ

Native American's have a special relationship with the land. Post-mining livestock grazing at the Kayenta/Black Mesa Complex supports a traditional way of life--with cultural ties going back hundreds of years. Peabody worked with local residents, establishing educational and grazing management programs. Together, they proved that land reclaimed for grazing is both achievable, and sustainable.

Bronze Award:

Peabody Energy Black Beauty Coal Company, Farmersburg Mine, Vigo and Sullivan Counties, IN

At Black Beauty, being a good neighbor means involvement with surrounding communities and governmental agencies, including schools. The company runs educational mine site activities, and has provided needed improvements at a local high school. It has installed lights at local baseball fields, and constructed an entrance road for a new town park. It has also built a cemetery monument, and donated land to construct a treatment plant for the town of Farmersburg. Black Beauty proves that coal mining, combined with "good neighbor" spirit, results in valuable benefits for everyone involved.

Best-of-the-Best Award

Each year the individual(s) who were directly responsible for the most outstanding reclamation are honored. The 2005 Best-of-the-Best award was presented to Ralph Sutton, Vice President of United Coals, Inc. for his work at the Stenger/Bond Surface Mine located in Clarksburg, WV.

More information is available at: www.osmre.gov

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